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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2509

May 24, 1991

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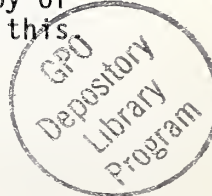
APRIL FARM WAGES UP -- During the week of April 7 - 13, farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$5.81 per hour, which was up 27 cents from a year earlier, USDA economists say. During the survey week, there were 2.95 million people working on the Nation's farms & ranches. **Contact:** Tom Kurtz (202) 475-3228.

SHRIMP & SOY MEAL -- During tests with six different soy-based feed pellets, shrimp unexpectedly put on between 4 & 22 percent more weight with the cheapest, least processed commercial soy meal formula, according to USDA Chemist David J. Sessa. "Since feed is the biggest expense for shrimp farmers," Sessa says, "they will likely snap up any new, less costly feed that keeps their shrimp healthy and fast growing." The findings could increase sales of U.S. soybean meal. **Contact:** David J. Sessa (309) 685-4011.

LOW-FAT TECHNOLOGIES -- USDA is holding a meeting June 18 in Gaithersburg, Md., to review the technologies now being developed to produce low-fat ground beef. Since much of the agenda involves cooking & tasting, the event will be held in the Gaithersburg Senior High School cafeteria. "This will be a good chance for government specification writers and purchasing officials to meet with industry designers of the many low-fat ground beef technologies and exchange ideas," says Daniel D. Haley. **Contact:** Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179.

SOVIETS TRIM IMPORTS -- Soviet officials have been unable to establish conditions for a market system to replace central administrative control, creating uncertainty for the future of U.S. ag exports to the country, USDA Economist Kathryn Zeimet says. U.S. ag exports in 1991 are likely to decrease in value by more than one-third from 1990. The value of grain exports may be down 40 percent, despite \$1 billion in export credits authorized in December for the Soviets. In 1990, the Soviet Union remained one of the top buyers of U.S. farm products, although purchases were about 9 percent below the previous year's record level of \$3.3 billion. **Contact:** Kathryn Zeimet (202) 219-0621.

1990 FACT BOOK OF AGRICULTURE -- Did you know U.S. consumers spent 11.8 percent of their disposable personal income (after taxes) on food in 1989? And, for each dollar spent for food in 1990, the farm value was 24 cents. Where did the rest go? Packaging cost 8 cents; intercity transportation was 4.5 cents; depreciation was 4.5 cents; advertising accounted for 4 cents; fuels & electricity cost 3.5 cents; before-tax profits was 3 cents; rent was 3 cents; interest cost 2.5 cents; repairs were 1.5 cents and other costs accounted for 6.5 cents. If you had read a copy of the recently published "1990 Fact Book of Agriculture" you would already know this. For a copy, call Marci Hilt (202) 447-6445. Media only, please.



NON-FARM INCOME -- About three-fourths of farm operators had off-farm income in 1988, says USDA Sociologist **Felicia LeClere**. "Over the last 20 years, the prevalence of part-time farming increased substantially," she says. Jobs accounted for 65 percent of the off-farm income & the remainder came from investments, welfare payments, Social Security payments & other sources. Some farm operators work part time off the farm because their farm operations are economically marginal, LeClere says. **Contact: Felicia LeClere (202) 219-0534.**

AG IN CLASSROOM -- Through the efforts of "Ag in the Classroom," a national ag literacy project coordinated by USDA, students learn more about agriculture. Through Ag in the Classroom workshops & in-service training, teachers learn how to integrate agriculture into the subjects they teach. "The aim is not to teach kids how to become farmers or ranchers," says Program Director **Shirley Traxler**, "but rather to help them understand the role and importance of agriculture in today's economy and society." Ag in the Classroom celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. **Contact: Shirley Traxler (202) 447-5727.**

FARM MACHINERY SALES UP -- Unit sales of tractors & other farm machinery rose in 1990, says USDA Economist **Marlow Vesterby**. This continues a trend that began in 1987, when farmers started replacing aging equipment after several years of deferring purchases. Sales jumped 10 percent for two-wheel-drive tractors & 15 percent for combines. Capital expenditures for farm machinery totaled \$8.1 billion last year. **Contact: Marlow Vesterby (202) 219-0422.**

PASTA-LIKE WEED -- USDA scientists have whipped up their own brand of "pasta" to kill weeds & insects. The scientists wrap such natural pest controls as nematodes & fungi in a dough that acts as "an effective biological control of insects and weeds," says **William J. Connick, Jr.**, a USDA research chemist. Connick found that durum wheat flour, called semolina -- the same flour for pasta -- can be used to make granules that entrap nematodes & fungi so they can be applied to fields. **Contact: William J. Connick, Jr. (405) 286-4527.**

FMHA BEGINS HOUSING LOAN GUARANTEE PROGRAM -- USDA will begin guaranteeing commercial housing loans to help low- & moderate-income rural residents get home financing in a 20-state pilot program. **La Verne Ausman**, administrator of USDA's Farmers Home Administration, says the program authorizes FmHA guarantees of loans made by eligible commercial credit institutions in rural areas of Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia & Washington. **Contact: Sally Lawrence (202) 447-4323.**

CANOLA STANDARDS -- USDA is proposing to establish U.S. standards for canola. Such standards would require official inspection & weighing of canola seed shipped outside the U.S., except under certain provisions. Official inspection & weighing would be available for domestic shipments, but not required. **John C. Foltz**, administrator of USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service, says U.S. consumption of canola oil has more than doubled in the past two years. Consumer interest has grown primarily due to its nutritional characteristics. **Contact: Dana Stewart (202) 382-0378.**

Editor: Marci Hilt Phone: (202) 447-6445

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

- AGRICULTURE USA #1772** -- The consumption of sugar & sweeteners is on the increase in the U.S. & in the second of a two-part series, **John Snyder** examines the health implications with various experts. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)
- CONSUMER TIME #1254** -- Summer food safety; watt reduction; food safety questions about BST; are food additives safe; more stone-washed colors. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)
- AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1762** -- USDA News Highlights; help for the dairy industry; FmHA home loan program; help for disabled farmers; dairy inventory. (Weekly reel of news features.)
- NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1421** -- Navy divers cram carbohydrates; carbohydrates & trace elements; "washed-up" gypsy moths; viruses in vats; mastitis prevention. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)
- UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE** -- Tues., June 11, weekly weather & crop report; U.S. crop production, world ag supply & demand; Wed., June 12, world ag/grain situation, world cotton situation, world oilseed situation; Thurs., June 13, ag income/finance outlook; Fri., June 14, U.S. sugar yearbook. (These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.)

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

(Week of May 23, 25 & 27, 1991)

- ACTUALITIES** -- USDA Meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on crop development & the latest 30-day weather outlook; USDA Economist **Ed Allen** on wheat outlook; USDA Economist **Leland Southard** on poultry production & retail meat & poultry prices; USDA Economist **Nathan Childs** on retail food prices; & **Kathryn Zeimetz** on the Soviet Union's agricultural production, consumer prices & imports.
- UPCOMING FEATURES** -- **Lynn Wyvill** reports on the centennial of the National Forest System & **Deboria Janifer** reports on water lilies & care of perennials.
- EVERY OTHER WEEK:** **Agriculture Update**, five minutes of USDA farm program info, in news desk format with B-Roll footage.
- Available on Satellite **Westar IV**, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8:

THURSDAY 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT
SATURDAY 10 - 10:45 a.m., EDT
MONDAY 8 - 8:45 a.m., EDT

OFFMIKE

VACATION...also offers opportunities for interviews, says Michael Adams (WLDS, Jacksonville, Ill.). Mike noticed a neighbor doing some conservation work & took advantage of the opportunity to get an interview for use when he returns to work. Mike says damage caused by recent hail storms will lead to replanting a few acres, but generally his region is ahead of state averages for corn & beans.

CEDAR RIVER...is expected to crest several feet higher than usual level for Spring floods in Iowa, causing major problems for people living in low areas. Richard Balvanz (WMT, Cedar Rapids, Iowa) says corn is nearly planted & there is the usual high participation in programs by producers.

COTTON CROP...is forecast to be off about 10 percent in Arkansas, says Stewart Doan (ARN Agriculture, Little Rock). Soggy fields have prevented producers from planting a hoped-for 1 million acres. Stewart says weather is now shifting to drier summer patterns.

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Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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WASTE MANAGEMENT BILLS...in the Ohio legislature are being followed by Joe Cornely (WRFD, Columbus, Ohio). Joe says it is becoming more apparent that environmental & farmers' needs require all interests to work together instead of forcing unacceptable change. A few days of dry weather has prompted day & night corn-planting operations, which resulted in 2 million acres of corn being planted in one week.

HOT TOPIC...in the region served by Taylor Brown (Northern Ag Network, Billings, Mont.) is a study that recommended reintroducing wolves in Yellowstone Park. Taylor has been covering local hearings where he reports cattle producers are voicing their opposition. Taylor says wheat producers are behind schedule but grinning. Ground moisture & prospects for a good wheat crop are the best in years.

A REMINDER...Flag Day is Friday, June 14. Is your station or community planning an observance?

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division